DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 207 PS 023 424

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TITLE Rethinking Child Welfare Services in Illinois: A Summary of Findings from the Children's Policy Project.
INSTITUTION Chicago Univ., IL. Chapin Hall Center for Children.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 26p.
AVAILABLE FROM Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago, 1155 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637 ($12).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS At Risk Persons; *Child Welfare; *Community Services; *Family Characteristics; Family Problems; Financial Support; Legislation; Program Development; Public Policy; Quality of Life; Strategic Planning; Welfare Recipients; *Welfare Services
IDENTIFIERS Family Policy; *Family Resource and Support Programs; Family Support; Historical Background; Illinois; Welfare Reform

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations from the Children's Policy Project, which examined the child welfare system in Illinois. The report: (1) outlines the project's findings about the difficulties faced by existing child welfare services; (2) proposes ways to improve existing arrangements; (3) examines the fundamental problems with current arrangements; and (4) suggests new arrangements that might provide a better way for the state to meet the needs of troubled families. Topics on the functioning of the current system presented in this report include: (1) populations--the characteristics of the children and families served in the Illinois child welfare system and how they are served; (2) mandates--the history, philosophy, legal theory, and statutory framework that define the state's relationship to vulnerable children; (3) financial resources--the funding and budgeting processes that support child welfare services in the state, and the relationship between the Department of Children and Family Services, its funders, and its private service providers; and (4) operations--the structures and processes that shape service delivery. The report ends with a discussion of alternative arrangements for child welfare services, suggesting that improving the current system may be a worthwhile goal, but it may not be enough. (AA)

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